

**Opening Statement of  
Chairman Henry J. Hyde  
Before the Full Committee Hearing  
‘Japan’s Relations with Her Neighbors: Back to the  
Future?’**

**Thursday, September 14, 2006**

Welcome to our illustrious panel of experts. And let me extend sincere congratulations to the Imperial Family and the people of Japan on the occasion of last week’s birth of the little prince in Tokyo.

I recently returned from a two week fact-finding mission to the Asia-Pacific region, an area I first encountered more than six decades ago as a young naval officer. Our Congressional delegation made a stop, most

poignantly, in the Solomon Islands on August 15th, the sixty-first anniversary of the end of World War II. It was in the Solomons, at Guadalcanal, that a horrific six-month battle raged in 1942 and early 1943. We laid a wreath there on August 15th to honor those who fell.

Abraham Lincoln of Illinois stated in his Gettysburg Address, "The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." So, the world took little note of our modest wreath-laying at Guadalcanal. What is more significant, however, is that there were few other events to mark this important anniversary. Americans should ponder whether over a half-century hence, the September 11th

anniversary we just commemorated will also draw only passing attention from a few historians. In Japan, by contrast, the Prime Minister visited a shrine to honor his nation's war dead on August 15th. This caused some disquietude among Japan's neighbors because that shrine also honors some convicted war criminals.

While the eyes of the world turn to conflicts in other regions, all appears calm on the surface of this region washed by the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Unparalleled prosperity has arisen in the post-War years. The Pacific has become the major waterway over which the world's commerce flows. Yet even a brief visit to the region reveals that turbulent undercurrents lie just below this

pacific surface. Whether a rising China will become a responsible stakeholder remains an open question. The ability of old rivals, Japan and China, to find living space without bumping into each other is an emotionally charged issue. North Korea, as it reminded all Americans with its Fourth of July missile launches, remains a major source of regional instability. And maintaining the peace in the Taiwan Strait is a constant challenge for us all.

All of these sources of tension in the Asia/Pacific region require that we and our allies forge a united front. However, sadly, history keeps getting in the way. Our two major allies in East Asia, Japan and the Republic of Korea, have never joined in a common alliance. At a time

when the increasing North Korean nuclear threat casts a long shadow over the entire region, it is not in the national interest of the United States to have our key allies at odds with each other. It was curious when, following the recent North Korean missile launch, some leaders in Seoul chose to lay the blame for provocation at Tokyo's doorstep rather than pointing the finger where it belonged -- at the menacing dictator in Pyongyang.

Something needs to be done to address the critical issues at hand, given the immensity of the stakes involved, not only to regional peace but also to the prosperity of the world. Something needs to be done so

that Japan, the second-largest donor nation to the United Nations, can take its proper place as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Something needs to be done so that there is whole-hearted regional support for an immense task ahead -- the reunification of the Korean peninsula. Something needs to be done so that there is a full accounting of abductees from Japan, South Korea and other countries forcibly taken to North Korea. This last issue has been a particular human rights concern of our Committee; last year, we approved a resolution which overwhelmingly passed the Full House.

Japan is our good and trusted ally. The Republic of Korea is our good and trusted ally. The United States

needs both of them and needs them to fully cooperate on these and other issues.

Thus, the question we wish to address today is: why has Europe been able to bury a contentious past while East Asia has not? Why has Europe risen from the ashes of war to form NATO, establish a European Union, even introduce a common EURO currency, while East Asia lacks even fundamental regional security and economic institutions? The history of Twentieth Century Europe, including the history of the Holocaust, was surely no less bitter than that of Twentieth Century Asia. Yet, European nations which were victims of the Nazis were able to join forces with former Axis Powers to present a

united front against the Soviet threat during the Cold War.

While Europe has moved beyond its troubled past, in Asia it always seems to be “back to the future.”

Specifically, the Armitage Report on the U.S.-Japan relationship, issued by a bipartisan group of experts in 2000, suggested that Japan could play a key role, similar to that played by Great Britain, as an ally of the United States. A major difference, of course, is that Great Britain does not have a series of territorial disputes and unresolved historic issues with virtually all of her neighbors such as exists between Japan and Russia, the Koreans, China, and Taiwan. Is it sound policy to put all of America’s Asia/Pacific eggs into the Japanese basket



as long as these historic and territorial issues remain unresolved?

Let me add, as a member of the World War II generation, that I have no doubt that the truth of what happened during the Second World War will and must prevail. It is troubling to those of my generation to learn that the Yushukan (YOU-SHOE-CON) Museum in Tokyo is teaching younger generations of Japanese that the Second World War in Asia was launched by Tokyo to free the peoples of Asia and the Pacific from the yoke of Western imperialism. Well, I have just visited Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, and the Solomon Islands. And I can tell you that, while some spoke frankly of bitter

experiences remembered during the Japanese occupation, not one person in any of these countries told any member of our delegation that they fondly remembered the Imperial Japanese Army as liberators. The history being taught at this museum is not based on the facts, and it should be corrected.

We face immense challenges ahead in the Asia/Pacific region. When the story of this new century is finally recorded, the Middle East will not likely take center stage in the history books, despite our present, necessary focus on this region. The history of the Twenty-First Century will likely be written mainly in China, India, Japan, and a unified Korea. The stakes in

East Asia, thus, are great. The unity of our friends in the region, therefore, is essential. We simply cannot continue to allow history to impede us as a roadblock to destiny.

And, now, I welcome opening remarks from my friend, Mr. Lantos, the Ranking Democratic Member.